

Following is an Informational Notice from the Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services

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TO: Consumers, Families, Providers and Advocates

FROM: Peter Bisbecos, DDRS Director

DATE: February 1, 2008

RE: Sheltered Work

It has come to my attention that there is a rumor being spread that the State is planning to limit, or eliminate, sheltered work. Let me be clear—this rumor is false.

While it is not my practice to address rumors and speculation, I feel we must address this issue based on numerous emails and calls expressing fear and frustration on this subject. I am deeply concerned that this particular rumor is causing distress to the many people who rely on sheltered work and their families.

The origins of this rumor rest with a conversation that the State began with some providers and advocates regarding the future of day programs, including sheltered work. Our intent is to ensure flexibility, opportunity and maximum use of funds so that we may serve more people with the money entrusted to us by the Indiana Legislature. Part of that discussion included *the idea* that sheltered work could be paid for partially with federal funds if it was time limited. This was no more than a discussion point—it was not a proposal and there is no policy or proposed policy to this effect. Any representations to the contrary are false.

Unfortunately, it appears that some people have seen the original discussion document and jumped to a conclusion. Rather than calling me or the DDRS office to inquire directly, they have chosen to speculate about the state's intentions and then share their speculation with others. Scaring consumers and families based on bad information is inappropriate and I will not let it pass.

Over the past three years we have journeyed a long way together. My staff and I have made it a practice to be open and inclusive, particularly when discussing new ideas that will ultimately lead to the improvement of the system. In review, our mutual accomplishments include:

- saving enough money to bring 3,000 new people into services in this biennium
- convincing the legislature to leave all of the money from the former Fort Wayne State Developmental Center in DD services
- improving case management
- starting a new and unprecedented crisis management system
- expanding Outreach services to give providers an added resource in addressing difficult situations
- launching a training program for direct care professionals that will lead to college credit and real career paths

We have done all of this together! Improving the system further means that we must continue to push the envelope by asking difficult questions and consider all possibilities that could enhance services or increase independence for the individuals we serve—today and in the future.

I deeply value the relationships that we have built and intend to nurture and strengthen them. However, in situations where gossip leads to fear and consternation, I intend to address it head on.

Be assured, we do not intend to eliminate sheltered work.

Peter A. Bisbecos

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